

JUSTIFICATION  
FOR AN EXCEPTION TO FAIR OPPORTUNITY

1. Contracting Activity: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)  
Office of Acquisition Operations  
Technology Acquisition Center  
23 Christopher Way  
Eatontown, NJ 07724
  
2. Description of Action: The proposed action is for a brand name firm-fixed-price task order under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement (SEWP) V Government Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC).
  
3. Description of the Supplies or Services: VA Office of Information Technology (OI&T), Service Delivery and Engineering, Field Operations 5, in support of the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), has a requirement to procure Citrix Consulting Services (CCS) to provide support of the expansion of the Citrix XenDesktop software based remote access solution. The CCS vouchers will be for site planning , installation, and implementation support services. VA will receive 27 vouchers equating to 1,242 hours of CCS to provide the required services to complete the Citrix infrastructure expansion by October 31, 2015. However, these vouchers are available for use up to 12 months. The period of performance for this effort shall not exceed 12 months from date of award. Citrix software and hardware appliances are currently installed throughout the existing VA virtual server infrastructure and provide virtual terminal services to desktop systems across VA and include virtual secure accessibility to servers hosting the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) for processing of Veterans claims, as well as access to local area networks for other resources within the VBA domain. This allows VA to centrally deploy and manage software applications while providing secure, on-demand access to resources and provides for support of the anticipated growth to accommodate an increasing number of VBA teleworking employees to reduce the current claims processing backlog. CCS vouchers are required and will provide for analysis, design, and implementation activities for the expansion of the existing virtual server infrastructure supporting VBA located at the VA Hines, Illinois and Austin, Texas data centers. The existing Citrix XenDesktop remote access solution expansion will also provide improved Continuity of Operations support for VBA by expanding services to a second, geographically dispersed failover site which does not currently exist in the environment.
  
4. Statutory Authority: The statutory authority permitting an exception to fair opportunity is Section 41 U.S.C. 4106(c)(2) as implemented by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 16.505(b)(2)(i)(B), entitled "Only one awardee is capable of providing the supplies or services required at the level of quality required because the supplies or services ordered are unique or highly specialized."
  
5. Rationale Supporting Use of Authority Cited Above: Based on market research, as described in section 8 of this justification, it has been determined that limited

competition is available among authorized resellers of the required Citrix brand name CCS vouchers. The existing Citrix environment provides the underlying core functionality necessary for application virtualization currently being utilized in support of VA's datacenter consolidation and operating system migration efforts. VA's current remote access infrastructure is configured to support only Citrix software through Citrix NetScaler devices. Specifically, systems like VBMS and the Burial Operations Support System would not be able to run other brand name software due to the current Citrix software's proprietary code that is integrated into these systems. VA does not possess the expertise to re-design, re-engineer and re-validate the Citrix architecture itself or the resources for the implementation and migration activities required for the expansion.

VA is currently in the midst of upgrading and expanding the existing Citrix XenDesktop remote access solution to support 15,000 VBA users supported by Region 5. VA has a requirement to complete this upgrade and expansion, testing/validation and implementation by October 2015 in order to comply with executive orders mandating increased VBA telework positions. In order to complete this task within the required timeline, the Government requires Citrix services, available as CCS vouchers, as only Citrix or its authorized resellers have the required knowledge of the existing VA Citrix architecture. Citrix consulting has already been engaged with OI&T, end users, and stake holders performing discovery assessments and objective interviews since early 2014 to develop the initial environment. Under the initial contract, Citrix Consulting provided services for a minimum of three months of effort specifically devoted to Region 5 users. Accordingly, only Citrix or its authorized resellers have the unique ability to assist VA in upgrading and expanding the Citrix architecture supporting Region 5 by October 2015. Citrix and its resellers have extensive knowledge of VA, including VBA, to fulfill their role in architecting VA's next generation deployment of the Citrix remote access solutions (XenApp and XenDesktop). This extensive knowledge of VA's technical architecture and its caveats ensure a design and implementation that will meet VA's requirements while alleviating negative user impacts such as downtime and/or service interruptions. Any other provider of consulting services would have to perform similar discovery tasks, onboarding, and validation which would cause significant delays to support completion of the required upgrades and expansion by October 2015.

Additionally, VA requires these services so that the required upgrades and expansion can be completed with zero disruption to existing users, downtime of the system, or loss of data provided by Citrix solutions. Only CCS can ensure the requirements of scalability of the target environments and the stability of VA's existing environments during the critical migration process and for further expansions. Specifically, only Citrix or its resellers have direct access to Citrix tools, support, and resources, which reduces risk to the Government by assuring VA that any issues that arise can be mitigated immediately or much more rapidly than services provided by another provider, as there would be no additional layers to access the required information/code. Any other provider would have to go through at least one additional level of resources to contact and get access to the resources that Citrix consultants have readily available to them. This delay introduces additional risk to the Government that it would take an interminable amount of time to remediate issues, thereby creating a situation where severe downtime and disruption could occur, which is unacceptable to VA.

6. Efforts to Obtain Competition: Market research was conducted, details of which are in section 8 of this justification. Limited competition is anticipated for the required brand name consulting services vouchers. In accordance with FAR 5.301 and 16.505(b)(2), the resulting notice of contract award will be synopsisized and the justification posted on the Federal Business Opportunities Page within 14 days of award. In addition, this Justification for an Exception to Fair Opportunity will be made publicly available with the solicitation on the NASA SEWP V web site.

7. Actions to Increase Competition: In order to remove or overcome barriers to competition in future acquisitions for this requirement, the agency will work with the program office to perform additional market research so that other solutions can be considered.

8. Market Research: In May 2015 the Government technical experts reviewed similar consulting services from Microsoft Terminal Services and VMware View. It was determined that these service providers do not have the ability to provide support on the existing Citrix products in order to meet the October 2015 date to complete the required upgrade and expansion, testing/validation and implementation for Region 5. Furthermore, these providers do not have access to Citrix tools, support, and resources required to mitigate the risk of downtime and disruption.

Market research was conducted in July 2015 utilizing the NASA SEWP V GWAC Provider Lookup tool. Based on this market research, there are multiple GWAC holders who are providers of the brand name Citrix consulting vouchers providing the required support of the time sensitive expansion, redesign, installation and migration of data of the existing Citrix virtualization platform and providing VA the lowest risk. Therefore, limited competition is expected for this acquisition.

9. Other Facts: None